BOZART and Contemporary Verse

Combining JAPM *and The Oracle*

Founded by ERNEST HARTSOCK

SEPTEMBER-OCTOBER, 1932

OGLETHORPE UNIVERSITY, GEORGIA

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THORNWELL JACOBS, JAMES E. ROUTH and ROBERT LESEUR JONES, *Editors*

Associate Editors—NATHAN HASKELL DOLE and BENJAMIN MUSSER

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THE BULL

Seek no further for a sign
That flesh and blood are stuff divine,
  Here is life built like a tower
  And beauty charioted in power.
Here stands an empire in a beast,—
Trumpets, sacrifice, and feast.

His head is like a nation rising,
His nostrils curl with his despising,
  His hooves are terrible and true,
  His eyes are lightnings and the dew,
Lapis lazuli unflawed,
Dumb mirrors of omniscient God.

Life has built of good and sin
This temple of the masculine,
  Uncompromising, massive, square,
  Lust aspiring to a prayer,
Horns curved upward like a lyre
Played to the dim great god, Desire.

Worship that is born of wonder,
Of the hurricane and thunder,
  Could find no brighter altar place
  Than this wide, unaging face
Which gazes on the years with scorn
And spurns inertia on its horn.

—Robert P. Tristram Coffin

AUTUMN AGAIN

Here to these patient woods has come again
Autumn on the slow turning wheel of time;
Gently as death the slow, beseiging stain
Sinks in the hearts of leaves. Soft as a rhyme
Breathed in the ear of night the maple stirs
With vagabond winds from the dark house of years,
And chestnuts ripen in their tawny burrs;
The stream that leapt through summer's warmth now
wears
The lethargy of mellowing days, the grass
Thins with the blade of frost; the last late flowers
Vanish from road and byway to let pass
The long processional of listless hours.

When will man learn that all his years on earth
Could pass as gently as these days that glow
Like waning lamps before the winter's dearth?
There is no hurry in these leaves that go
The ancient way of earth; there is no greed
That rankles in the heart of tree or flower
To force the blossom or to cast the seed
Upon the earth before its destined hour.
There is no fear within the oak's stout heart
When the soft hands of winds take every leaf;
No laurel grieves to see its petals part;
The brook is mute with peace and not with grief.

Ages of seasoned growth and slow decay
Come like dim ghosts to lure these fields again,
And earth goes on its old, unhurried way,
Untouched by sorrow and unscarred by pain.

—ANDERSON M. SCRUGGS

SUPREME LOVER

I know that I shall never find—
Though I may search the planet's girth—
In all of fragrant womankind,
A greater lover than the earth.
There is no scented flesh as white
As slender birches when the dawn
Lifts them like flowers from the night;
No note of love was ever drawn
From tender throat as soft and low
As voice of leaves when twilight ends;
No hair of gold or somber glow
Is fine as that a willow bends
Above the bosom of a stream.
Though I should travel endless miles
Through lotus lands where women dream
Of lovers' ways and lovers' wiles,
I shall come back to lips of rain
That touch me on a misty day
And breath of lilacs that have lain
Dreaming the summer hours away.

Some quiet dawn or eventide
The hand that kept us long apart
A passing hour will sweep aside,
And then my heart shall find her heart.
Then we shall dream long, languid hours
Upon a hill, beneath the sun,
And Spring shall bring a gift of flowers
To wreathe the couch we lie upon;
Winter shall fling a cloak of snow
Between us and the starlit height
And Autumn bring us mists that glow
Like incense on a holy night.

I know that I shall never find
In all of lovely womankind,
In wistful eyes or lips of mirth,
A greater lover than the earth.

—ANDERSON M. SCRUGGS

SECOND PILGRIMAGE

In the incredible dark how smug you were
Until He called you from the sepulchre!

Were the two vehement sisters wholly wise
To have you so snatched back from paradise?

The frail, swift legend of your days again
Recaptured, having died like other men,

But made immortal, by this mute return
Unto an earth, the dead alone may spurn,

Having been so irrevocably bound
To that most usual covenant with the ground?

Twin sentimentalists, they both would probe
After the body underneath the robe,

Hear once again a heartbeat, and discover
If death means life, miraculously over,

Set free of artery and blood, released
From the long rapture, the unending feast.

Your sinister appearance from the womb
Of the dark earth, so that your flesh might bloom

Against the azure background of the sky,
A sign, a symbol of eternity,

Was really only woman's curious
Desire to restore her Lazarus!

No matter, you were perilously driven
Back to the earth, out of your nitch in heaven.

Did that first moan of yours evoke surprise
And more than tears of gladness in their eyes?

A stranger in a world you had outgrown—
How strange, the swift blood, hurrying by the bone?

What brilliant irony to bring you forth
From victory and the kind winding cloth!

The factual results were, after all,
Proven to be, at best, conjectual,

For memory was gone, you were not able
To put new wine upon the supper table;

To end the poor abstractions in their minds,
Or let immortal sunlight through the blinds,

Strip the decayed enigma from the bone,
Or make a fresh creed from the bright unknown.

But being wise and being merely human—
You would not tell your secret to a woman.

—HAROLD VINAL

SURVIVAL

This, Eric, is a bitter pill
For you to swallow, that the heart,
That furious engine, must be still
At last, and the surviving art

Your chisel and your thin wrist shaped
Remain behind you; but this is
The way of others who escaped
Into the bankrupt silences.

Yet, for the moment, you were Greek,
Making the stone you profit by
The vision of some dim antique
Illusion, many will pass by.

Your moving and seductive art
Will find some evil critic kind;
What matter, Eric, that the heart
Moved one and all the rest are blind!

Fear not the fatal day, my friend,
The mind distraught, the weak will broke;
Their words are nothing in the end
And all their cynic gibes a joke.

The laughing mind, the fluent brain
Adroitly shapes the fluent stone,
And so, some beauty must remain,
Time shall call utterly its own.

—HAROLD VINAL

ABDICATION

It is so many years since I have spent
A day of leisure out beneath the fair
Warm circle of the sky, and worshipped where
A thrush sings Mary's grace, and been content.
Why should I bear this shameful banishment?
Why should I lack the little faith to dare
To live? My hands, my purse; my only share
Of wealth, a bird song and a flower scent.

Is there some templed flame with healing power
For weakened wills? I am a neophyte
Who comes to claim the courage of an hour
With which to abdicate my every right
In lust of silver coin and gilded tower
And stand clean-souled again in my own sight.

—MAUD MERRITT

I SHALL GO SOFTLY

"In the bitterness of my heart I shall go softly all my years."

I shall go softly now through all my years;
Softly as one walks through the fields of late summer,
Under a quiet rain.
Where, beside crumbling fence-rails, the dusty velvet of mullein
Is frosted with silver,
And the backs of the goldenrod leaves are blue.
Softly, where on the uplands the clustered wild grasses,
Bleached and burned to the color of foxes,
Curve with the weight of the drops.
Softly as one who walks—
Turning aside for the spreading branches of sumach,
Upthrusting cones of copper fruit, and scattering painted leaves
At the pressure of rain.
Never less softly than this shall I walk again.

I shall go softly now through all my years;
Softly as falling snowflakes
Settling on snowflakes already fallen,
In the fastness of winter woodlands,
Softly as one moves through these woods when the birches,
No longer white in the midst of such pallor,
Bend in grey shame, obsequious to the snow.
Never less softly than this through my years shall I go.

—PHYRNE SQUIER

NOCTURNE

Night and the city ride the horses of darkness and sound;
In blackness, in fury, in thunder upon the ramparts of the brain
They circle, they vanish, they close, the beasts scream and retreat and draw nigh.

Nocturnes were tender, there was song and the beauty of flutes.
Earth turned too often: the brain fails the worn orbit, the eye discerns void and atom, the light perishes forever each diurnal dusk.
The night is a mirror of basalt, the city a forest of monoliths drawn among stars;
I am pressed between the night and the city, a point in the mirror of darkness, a grain upon image of stone.

I know what winged life feels in amber, the airless river bearing down, a thousand years of water wailing overhead.
A new race may find curious trove: the flesh hearing hoofs and babbling of mirrors no more, the bones glittering in the black amber of the night, the heart a rattle of purged sinew upon the spine.

The dream of amber dies, the skull is clothed, the brain spins night without end.
To be alone, to know not time, to be deafened to motion and blind to space,
To perceive only the images and deaths wrought within . . . but this is the very godhead.

I have risen from amber, from wings set in basalt and stone;
I have shaped the clay, the visible form of silence.
From sounds and cities, from mirrors and thud of beasts, from desolation I have wrung kinship with godhead;
Out of loneliness I have understood gods.

—Don Gordon

QUI PRO VOBIS ET PRO MULTIS EFFUNDETUR

Something there was, within the wood,
Most strange, today. A deeper hush
Than sound-wrapped pine, or unstirred blade,
  Stiller than mountain-ash,
Filled with its silences the tall
Cathedral arches of the trees....
As one, unworthy, walked, there fell
    Five gleaming rays.

Five red-tipped rays transfixed the gloom,
The vast green gloom of virgin boughs;
And where they touched, five wounds of flame
  Swift from a lone tree rose.
There tangled thorns shed drops of blood
Into a chaliced pool below....
As one, unworthy, awkward, stood,
    He suddenly *knew*!

—Benjamin Musser

LATE AUTUMN

Through the dark valley
  There drifts a wraith:
For mist moves greyly
  In shroud of death.

No more the willow
  Is green; each blade
Of grass turns yellow;
  The tumbleweed

In comic dudgeon
  Zooms, and is gone;
No more the pigeon
  Grubs, nor the drone

Rifles pale honey
From sleeping flowers.
The cool rock cranny
Yearns for the fires

Of skies of summer,
When all they have
Pours in shimmer
Of wave on wave,

Glints on the river,
Shines on the road,
Wealth to recover
And golden mood....

Let us go swiftly,
Feeling our way
Through dark brush deftly,
By mist-grey tree

To far-flung meadow,
Hoar-unnipped,
Where warmth in shadow
And stream has kept

Guard for the valley
Against that wraith
Who drifts on, greyly,
Whispering death.

—Benjamin Musser

A FARMER'S DAWN

I am caught in the flying silks of dawn,
In a chariot of leaping air,
Drawn by horses of noble hills
Harnessed with dew and a silver prayer.

We lift and skim above the plains
Of gold fringed wheat and ribboned corn;
Over the mauve of the clover fields;
Over the woodlands' sheltered morn.

The herds are pale as the morning stars:
They are the grazing nebulae
Of a Creator's vision of future worlds
To feed the years of eternity.

Though I shall drop in the sun's hot basket
Back to the lurch of a tractor's pace,
I have sowed my seeds in the soil for tomorrow:
I shall harvest an Eden in this place!

—Rena M. Manning

MOUNTAIN CLIMB

The rain could not destroy the eager fire
Of going in us, nor could any care;
There was no loneliness when our desire
Found us prepared, as one is after prayer.
The sky was dark above our heads, and through it
The upward way was like a smoky room.
We were among the firs before we knew it,
Ascending slowly through their emerald gloom.

The small pines were a silver pestilence
To shoulders; spruces were lean turrets bending
Precariously over, but the dense
Blue conifers could not prevent our ending:
We were upon the summit in gray wonder,
Looking on greatness wider than the thunder.

—Robert Leseur Jones

THE LOVERS

The night is full of tombs;
Her cypress colonnades
Chant in the starry glooms
Hymns to the King of Spades .....

I wandered on till dawn,
Till eyes were heavy and red
Trying to read the gnawn
Obits of all the dead.

Suddenly, wing on wing
And curve on burning curve,
A song of triumphing
Rose with a lilt and verve;

It overflowed the sky,
Flooded the fearful mind:
"We are those who do not die,
Whose names you could not find.

We loved with love too great
To heed oblivion;
Outsoaring Night and Fate,
What need have we of stone?"

—Geoffrey Johnson

AS DAVID

I read it in the Holy Book;
Just such a smooth and shining stone
Young David gathered from the brook,
And, with a shepherd's sling alone,
The Man of Gath was overthrown!

Now, in the current of my mind,
I plunge an eager hand, and pray
That by some magic I may find
The certain Stone to suit my need
An apt and neatly rounded creed,
A deadly smooth philosophy,
Wherewith to arm myself, and slay
The Philistine confronting me!

—Sara Henderson Hay

REVELATION

Let sorrow's broken knife
Cut you a slice of mouldy bread,
And as you eat it, talk with life
Lonely, uncomforted,
And you will prize the sudden gold
Of broom-flowers in a gust,
And in that brief glimpse grip and hold
A joy immune to dust.

Drink water from a cup
Frugally, and your parched throat
Will slowly tighten while you sup.
Then on your lips a note
Will be as rain caught in a hand
After a drought, cool, sparkling,
And you will quietly understand
Why hearts must sing!

—John Richard Moreland

WINTER SANCTUARY

Snowflakes filtered down,
A bitter wind harried the trees,
No sign of green remained; yet brown
Against the shriveled grass, I saw
Two rabbits watching me with fearless eyes.
A red-bird flashed into the underbrush,
While sparrows twittered cheerfully.

Your orchard was enchanted ground—
A place of peace
Upon a high plateau above the world.

I turned, you stood beside me
With your calm, unearthly look . . .
Then warmth ineffable
Descended like a flame,
And wrapped the sanctuary
You had made for us.

—Louise Crenshaw Ray

TRANSITION

Your body was the bridge across
A stream of bitterness and loss

To fields where crimson poppies bring
Relief from gray remembering.

Serene and beautiful you lay
Beside me as the dawning day

Made silhouettes of spire and tree,
And I, immune to grief and free

From every ghost, led by your hands
Discovered treasure-bearing lands.

—Louise Crenshaw Ray

NO WALLS

I met you by the sea, and all our ways
Together since have known the taste of sea
In salt spray blown along the wind, or free
Long curves of surf in friendly island bays.
And I am glad, remembering all our days
Golden with sun to golden memory
And starlit nights too exquisite to be
Remembered save with some sweet whispered phrase.

No walls have shut us in, O kind and true!
No doors to bar, no locks and chains and keys
Confine the sweet firm flesh, the keen clear mind.
You roof enough for me, and I for you;
The sky, the sea, the sand, the clean wind, these
Have been our house, our home, O true and kind!

—Clifford Gessler

TO FORTUNE

In your approach you wore a confidence
And in your gaze a magnanimity.
You offered gifts in rich munificence
Till all the world seemed one great treasury.
One ran to meet you with expectant eyes;
Your cornucopia was bright with gold,
And silver flagons labeled with surprise,
And packets tied with colors manifold.

Then, like a greedy gourmand at a feast,
He snatched the objects as you let them fall;
The brilliant were the things he fancied most,
An irridescence gleaming over all.
But after inventoried gain and loss
He found his jewel case contained a cross.

—L. Logan Kean

RUGS

Primrose and violet, indigo and orange—
Secrets of the dyeing of the eastern seas,
  Black of the pomegranate,
  Gray of the lichen,
Green of the juices from the buckthorn trees.

Secret of the dyeing that lurks in the mountains,
Under the drying windswept pine,
  Yellow of saffron,
  Brown of gallnuts,
Laurel and thistle and myrtle vine.

Nomad shepherds setting forth in the morning,
Carrying the distaff, the spindle and the reel,
  Songs from the Arab,
  Tales of the Cashmere,
Sung among the flocks to the whir of the wheel;

Nomad shepherds weaving in their tents;
Tents of hairy goat-skin shutting out the rain,
  Patterns of harebell,
  Poppy flower and henna,
The gloom of the gorges and the flower-strewn plain.

Children of Tabriz in black wool caps,
Dipping the stuffs in the earthen pots,
Children of Tabriz with wasted little fingers;
Counting and tying the myriads of knots!

—Myra Louise Armstrong

PASTURE ON PARNASSUS

By Robert Leseur Jones

The Yolk of Thunder, by Robert P. Tristram Coffin (Macmillan, New York).

There is something in the work of Robert P. Tristram Coffin that one would hardly tolerate in another poet: an exceedingly cold, and often bleak, manner of saying things that sometimes amounts almost to plainness; but one always realizes that behind this paradoxical characteristic there exists a definite purpose. *The Yolk of Thunder* is not a diminution of this method; it is an amplification, full of certainty, strength, and conviction as to the efficacy of his approach. To Coffin, there is beauty in bats, in weather vanes, and in tree toads. No subject seems to subdue the ranklings of his art. It is a strange matter that his poems are never really fantastic, it occurs to one after reading his titles. The reader will rarely find a modern poet who understands words as thoroughly as does Coffin. He is able with a single phrase to convey immense matters, to connote complexities, and to describe with exceeding effectiveness, despite the fact that his diction is often of the simplest, plainest kind. *The Yolk of Thunder* is a genunely strong book, and it merits a maximum of lauditory comment.

Color of Steel, by Louise Crenshaw Ray (The University of North Carolina Press).

The first book of a writer that has been working long and successfully is always looked forward to with a great deal of anticipation. Such is the case with Louise Crenshaw Ray, whose *Color of Steel*, a volume of rather Southern but, at the same time, of rather universal, content, appeared during the summer. The author has found her material in Alabama Indian lore, in the steel district of Birmingham, her native city, and in the small, bigoted towns that are commonplaces throughout the South. The book has the sound of wind running sibilantly through rows of bottoms corn, the odor of iron oxidation, and a very good taste, the nature of which is hard to determine. The selection of the most interesting part of *Color of Steel* is not difficult; it is called "From the Creek Country," a section devoted to arrowheads and burial mounds. Wary of mere verbiage, if sometimes a bit too descriptive, Mrs. Ray habitually fashions lines that are well balanced and convincing. That particular habit is her most commendable quality perhaps; too many women poets nowadays pad; fashion ornate structures with nothing inside. "Shadowy Possession," an unusual poem and

probably the best in Mrs. Ray's book, furnishes a hint of what the author will do in the future. The volume itself is not entirely commendable, but its excellence as a first book overshadows its few weaknesses.

Connecticut Poets (Henry Harrison, New York).

If the statistics regarding the assertion that a child or so is born into the world every minute, are true, then surely it cannot be too difficult to believe that anthologies appear as frequently. Not that there exists a quarrel about the matter; one merely begins to wonder after a while if some mind with a twist for the novel will bring out a collection "of the best that has been published in all anthologies." But that discussion is beside the point: *Connecticut Poets* contains some commendable poetry, as it should when such names as Clinton Scollard, Jessie Rittenhouse, Anna Hempstead Branch, Wilbert Snow, Roselle Mercier Montgomery, and James Rorty appear in the index; but much of the other material is poor, of the quality one can expect from the small writing circles of a conventional literary community. Of course, it is not necessary that all of the poetry included in the anthology be of the first water, for the collection is primarily an encyclopedia of state poets; but the fact remains that some of the inclusions are very bad indeed.

Light Lines and Dears, by Wilfred J. Funk (Robert M. McBride, New York).

One cannot say that Wilfred Funk is an artist, just as one cannot say Jefferson Machamer, the illustrator of *Light Lines and Dears*, is an artist; but, thank goodness, there is more in the world than art alone. In this second book of hilarious verse by Mr. Funk, who is an official of Big Business in daily life and a poet in spare moments, the author has succeeded eminently in epitomizing Broadway, Fifth Avenue, and the concomitant speakeasies. The humor is that of a native New Yorker, lively yet subtle, kind yet often seemingly bitter, the laughing-up-the-sleeve type. Let us quote a profound revelation with regard to Wall Street:

Ding, dong bell,
Market gone to hell!
Who put her there?
Little Tommy Bear!
Who'll geeva pull,
Little Johnny Bull!
What a naughty little pup
To eat the paper profits up.

Flamingo, by Vivian Yeiser Laramore (Henry Harrison, New York).

It is seldom that one is fortunate enough to discover a poet laureate who is really a poet; in the case of Vivian Yeiser Laramore, poet laureate of Florida, one is aware of a departure from the conventional. Some of the work in *Flamingo* is indeed excellent, and, although the author is not as widely known as she could be, she deserves much prominence. There is a finish to her lines that is exceedingly pleasing, her combination of lyric and dramatic effects is interesting, and the emotional clarity of her poems is gratifying. Because of a lack of space, it is impossible to quote the title poem "Flamingo," but this particular thing is outstanding.

The Torch Undimmed, by Edna Davis Romig (Dorrance & Co.).

Edna Davis Romig possesses a pleasing lyric gift and a certain delicacy of expression that make *The Torch Undimmed* somewhat better than one anticipates from the appearance of the book. The title is a bit discouraging, but the content of the volume is, to say the least, encouraging. If the author is given to archaisms at times, she is forgiven, since such poems as "April," "Let Marble be Remembered Not," and "How Vain My Singing" justify almost any discrepancy.

Ernest Hartsock Memorial Award

"In the memory of Ernest Hartsock, donated by Cora Smith Gould —a $25 prize for the best poem in each issue of *Bozart and Contemporary Verse.*" The Ernest Hartsock Memorial Award is hereby made to Don Gordon, of Los Angeles, for his poem entitled "Image of Gold," which appeared in the July-August number.